

October 14, 2016

## DOH-OKALOOSA OBSERVES OCTOBER AS SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME AWARENESS MONTH

A Safe Sleep Environment for Infants is as Easy as ABC



**Contact:** Ryan Mims

[HealthyOkaloosaPIO@flhealth.gov](mailto:HealthyOkaloosaPIO@flhealth.gov)

(850) 833-9240 ext. 2162

Cell: (850) 420-2198

**Ft. Walton Beach, Fla –** With October being Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Awareness Month, the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) hopes to help new and expecting parents understand how to take action and reduce the risk. A sudden infant death is when a death cannot be explained after a thorough investigation that includes a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and a review of the medical history. In 2014, about 1,500 infants died of SIDS in the United States. SIDS and unsafe sleep are among the leading causes of infant mortality, the death of a baby before his or her first birthday.

“Through the Florida Healthy Babies initiative, we are meeting with community partners to discuss infant mortality and what steps we can take as a community to address the issue,” stated Dr. Karen A. Chapman, Director of DOH-Okaloosa. “It is important for new and expecting parents to understand the simple steps to make sure their baby is safe and healthy—starting with where and how they sleep.”

Although SIDS is not preventable, there are ways for parents and caregivers to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death. An unsafe sleep environment can cause infants to accidentally suffocate on soft bedding or anything that covers their mouth and nose. If an infant is co-sleeping with another individual, that individual could unknowingly roll on top of or against the infant. It's important to make sure infants have the safest environment to sleep in, and it's easy to do.

Here are the ABC's to ensure that your baby has a safe sleep environment:

### **A – Alone**

- Babies should never co-sleep with an adult. Consider having your baby sleep in the same room as you, but not in the same bed.

### **B – Back**

- Place babies on their backs to sleep. The back position is proven to reduce SIDS deaths.
- Older babies roll over, and that's okay. Make sure their sleep is clear.

### **C – Crib**

- Use safety approved cribs, bassinets or play yards with a firm mattress covered with a tight-fitting sheet.
- Babies shouldn't sleep in an adult bed, on the couch or in a chair.
- Dress the baby in a one-piece sleeper suit.
- Don't use pillows, blankets or crib bumpers.

- Make sure nothing covers the baby's head.
- There should be no toys in the sleep area.

**Never let anyone smoke near the baby.** The risk of SIDS is even greater when a baby shares a bed with a smoker. To reduce risk, do not smoke during pregnancy, and do not smoke or allow smoking around your baby. For help in quitting, visit [www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/quityourway](http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/quityourway).

To observe SIDS Awareness Month, DOH-Okaloosa and the Healthy Start Community Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties assembled safe sleep environment displays in the main lobby of both the DOH-Okaloosa offices in Fort Walton Beach and Crestview. The public is invited to come view the displays to learn more about how to keep their infant safe while sleeping.

In addition to the displays, there will be a community meeting to discuss the planned next steps for the Florida Healthy Babies initiative. DOH-Okaloosa invites the public to attend to learn more about infant mortality and how they can take action to make a difference in their community.

**What:** Florida Healthy Babies Community Meeting  
**When:** October 20, 2016  
 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM  
**Where:** Crosspoint United Methodist Church  
 214 Partin Drive South  
 Niceville, Florida 32578

For more information or to learn to get involved in the Florida Healthy Initiative or to RSVP to attend the community meeting on October 20, please email [HealthyOkaloosa5210@flhealth.gov](mailto:HealthyOkaloosa5210@flhealth.gov).

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